

To Egypt You Shall Go

Mt 2:13-15

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Joe Louis was the world heavyweight boxing champion from 1937 until he retired in 1949.
 - 1. In 1946 Louis prepared to defend his title against a skilled fighter named Billy Conn.
 - 2. Louis was warned to watch out for Conn's great speed and his tactic of darting in to attach & then moving quickly out of his opponent's range.
 - 3. In a famous display of confidence, Louis replied, "He can run, but he can't hide."
- B. There are times that it's in our best interest to run & hide.
 - 1. When Pharaoh sent his armies after the Hebrews, it was in the best interest of the Hebrews to run!
 - 2. Shortly after Saul's conversion, the Jews plotted to kill him. We then read that the "disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket" (Acts 9:25).
- C. In the text, this morning, we find that it was in the best interest of Jesus & his family to run & hide.
 - 1. Herod's plan to kill just the Christ had been thwarted by the magi's obedience to their dream; thus, Herod decides to kill all the male children two & under in the area around Bethlehem.
 - 2. God sends Herod & dream telling him to take the family to Egypt until Herod is dead.
 - 3. It was quite common for Jews to flee to Egypt in difficult times.
 - a. When Uriah, the prophet, discovered that King Jehoiakim planned to kill him, "he was afraid and fled and escaped to Egypt" (Jer 26:21).
 - b. When Nebuchadnezzar came against Judea, he left some of the Jews living there. Nebuchadnezzar then appointed a governor of Judea & some members of the Jewish royal family came & killed the governor. We then read, "Then all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the forces arose and went to Egypt, for they were afraid of the Chaldeans" (2 Ki 25:26).
- D. In a dream, Joseph is told to take his family out of Bethlehem & go to Egypt.
 - 1. This passage informs us much about God—we see in this passage the way that God protects not only the Christ but our salvation through the Christ.
 - 2. This passage also tells us much about Joseph—as in the narrative of his taking Mary as his wife, we see him as a man obedient to the will of God.
 - 3. This morning, we want to examine this "Flight by Night" & learn from our God & his servant, Joseph. We shall see DIVINE PERSPECTIVE & DIVINE PROTECTION.

II. DIVINE PERSPECTIVE, v 13.

- A. God gave Joseph the proper perspective—a divine perspective—on what was taking place: "Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.'"
- B. There have been some attempts to paint Joseph here as a guy who is so inept that God must constantly send dreams to tell him what to do.
 - 1. An angel of the Lord had to appear to Joseph to instruct him to take Mary as his wife & an angel has to appear again to tell Joseph to take his family out of Bethlehem.

2. It is terribly wrong to see Joseph as devoid of common sense here.
 - a. Rather, there was no human way to for Joseph to see the events that took place here.
 - b. There was no way for Joseph to know that Mary's unborn Child had been conceived of the Holy Spirit & there was no way for Joseph to know that Herod was about to kill all the male children in the region of Bethlehem.
3. Therefore, Joseph stood in desperate need of divine guidance for the events he faces are once-in-human-history events.
 - a. Without a divine perspective, the events of human history could be drastically different.
 - 1) Christ would not have had a human father, and Herod would likely have killed Jesus.
 - 2) Had Herod killed Jesus before the proper time, we couldn't be saved from sin.
- C. What should we learn about a DIVINE PERSPECTIVE?
 1. We see that man needs a DIVINE PERSPECTIVE to know what to do.
 - a. Without the revelation from God, Joseph would never have known what to do.
 - b. Without divine revelation, humans would never know what to do.
 - 1) "I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps" (Jer 10:23).
 - 2) "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple" (Ps 119:130).
 - c. Remember what we said about the view on some that Joseph was spiritually obtuse: There was no way that he could have foreseen these events & he, thus, stood in need of divine direction.
 - 1) There is much that God tells us that man could not foresee.
 - a) Do you believe that Abraham could ever have foreseen that God would want him to leave Ur & go to Canaan? Do you believe that Abraham would ever have thought take Isaac & sacrifice him had God not told him to do so?
 - b) Is there a one of us who would know that baptism essential to salvation without the DIVINE PERSPECTIVE that informs us that is so? Is there any of us who would know that God intended marriage as a life-long endeavor without the DIVINE PERSPECTIVE that it is so?
 - 2) In the year AD 303, the Roman Emperor Diocletian issued a decree which he hoped would extinguish the spreading flames of Christianity One of his primary objectives was the seizure and destruction of the Christian Scriptures
 - a) Later that year, officials enforced the decree in North Africa.
 - b) One of the targets was Felix, a leader who lived near Carthage.
 - i. The mayor of the town ordered Felix to hand over his Scriptures.
 - ii. Though some judges were willing to accept scraps of parchment, Felix refused to surrender the Word of God at the insistence of mere men. Resolutely, he resisted compromise.
 - iii. Roman authorities finally shipped Felix to Italy where he paid for his stubbornness with his life.
 - iv. On August 30, Felix laid down his life rather than surrender his Gospels.
 - 3) If there is not a need for man to have a DIVINE PERSPECTIVE, why was Felix willing to die before he parted with the Scriptures?
 2. Furthermore, God provides the DIVINE PERSPECTIVE man needs.
 - a. God saw that Joseph needed a DIVINE PERSPECTIVE; God knew that Joseph would have no idea that Herod was coming to destroy the Christ, so he provided him with a

DIVINE PERSPECTIVE.

- b. God has provided man with everything man needs to know.
 - 1) “No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was every produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pt 1:20-21).
 - 2) “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Pt 1:3).
 - 3) “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tm 3:16-17).
- c. Man needed a DIVINE PERSPECTIVE & God has given man that DIVINE PERSPECTIVE.

III. DIVINE PROTECTION, vv 13-15.

- A. “Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.”
- B. God is here seen as a Father protecting his Son.
 - 1. God has long been the protecting Father.
 - a. Notice the original context of Hos 11:1-4 (READ TEXT).
 - 1) While Matthew takes this text & applies it to Jesus' flight into Egypt, that isn't the original context.
 - 2) The original context has to do with Israel's being in Egyptian bondage after the death of Joseph.
 - 3) Notice the picture of God's protecting fatherhood that's painted here:
 - a) He called Israel out of Egypt—there was a great deal of protection in that mighty act: allowing the Israelites to cross the Red Sea; providing them with manna, quail & water in the wilderness; & providing them with guidance through the pillar of fire & the cloud.
 - b) God taught Ephraim to walk & healed them. The picture is likely that as a child falls & hurts himself, God would take Israel in his arms & heal them when they fell.
 - c) It was God who fed Israel—just as a child is helpless against the ravages of hunger without his parents, God fed his son Israel.
 - b. The picture of God here as protecting his Son from the Slaughter of the Innocents should come as no surprise.
 - 2. But, in another sense, it wasn't just Jesus whom God was protecting, but he was protecting us as he ordered Joseph to take the Child into Egypt.
 - a. Again, I'm fully aware that God's plan cannot be thwarted. However, what if Jesus had been killed by Herod before the time was right? Would there be any hope whatsoever for our sinfulness?
 - b. God continues to protect his people.
 - 1) “We can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’” (Heb 13:6).
 - 2) “We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him” (1 Jn

- 5:18).
- c. How does God protect us?
- 1) God protects his people from temptation.
 - a) “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor 10:13).
 - b) There is not a single temptation which can come to us that we cannot handle.
 - i. Can you imagine if Satan were not limited in his ability to tempt & he could come and do with us as he pleased?
 - ii. Is there a one of us who could withstand temptation? Is there a one of us who could overcome and have eternal life?
 - 2) God protects his people from Satan's reach.
 - a) “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one”(Jn 10:28-30).
 - b) Jesus does **not** say that we cannot leave of our own free will. However, Satan cannot come & take us away without our consent.
 - 3) God protects his people from evil.
 - a) Both times that Satan attacked Satan he could only do what God permitted him to do.
 - i. “The Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.' So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord” (Job 1:12).
 - ii. When Satan went back before God to ask for further permission, God said, “Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life” (Job 2:6).
 - b) There are some who would say, “Wait a minute, Justin. God doesn't protect his people from evil, for bad things happen to God's people all the time.”
 - c) However, we need to understand a couple important points:
 - i. First, God did not protect Job from *all* evil.
 - Job lost his livelihood, his children, & his health—he suffered a great deal.
 - However, Job did not suffer more than God permitted—God knew Job's limit & Satan could go that far and no further.
 - ii. Second, we do not know all the evil that would befall us without God's protection.
 - “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12).
 - Because we struggle against unseen spiritual forces, it is impossible to know how much worse evil we would suffer were it not for God's protection.
 - 4) God protects his people from death:
 - a) “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (Jn 11:25-26).

- b) That obviously does not mean that these bodies shall live forever (would we even want that?). This does mean that death is not the end. While our bodies shall die, our spirits shall never see hell!
 - 5) Let us rest confidently in the protection of God!
- C. We also have the example of Joseph's protection of Jesus.
 - 1. Joseph gets up, takes Jesus & Mary by night and travels to Egypt.
 - a. Egypt's border was about 100 miles from Bethlehem—not difficult with today's transportation, but with no more than your feet, perhaps a couple donkeys, & a newborn son, it's not going to be an easy trip!
 - b. However, Joseph gets up & leaves by night so that he can escape the detection of Herod's men.
 - 2. There isn't a parent here this morning who wouldn't have done precisely as did Joseph.
 - a. We parents are going to protect our children. It's not at all uncommon to hear stories in the wake of some catastrophe how that parents sacrificed themselves without the slightest thought in order to save their children.
 - b. However, do we protect our children's lives but leave their souls wide open to attack?
 - 1) While I'm confident we shudder at either thought, would we rather our children lose their lives or their souls?
 - 2) I hope to God that's a no-brainer! “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt 10:28).
 - 3. Fathers, do we protect our children?
 - a. We have that solemn responsibility:
 - 1) “The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day; the father makes known to the children your faithfulness” (Is 38:19).
 - 2) “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4).
 - b. Are we properly raising our children & protecting them from the work of Satan?
- D. The early American Indians had a unique practice of training young boys to be brave.
 - 1. On the night of a boy's thirteenth birthday, after learning hunting, scouting, and fishing skills, he was put to one final test.
 - a. He was placed in a dense forest to spend the entire night alone.
 - b. Until then, he had never been away from the security of the family and the tribe.
 - 2. But on this night, he was blindfolded & taken several miles away.
 - a. When he took off the blindfold, the young teen was in the middle of a thick woods in the dark and, understandably, they would be terrified!
 - b. But, after spending what must have felt like an eternity in the forest, dawn broke & the first rays of sunlight entered the interior of the forest.
 - 1) As light began to come through the forest, the boy was able to see, to his utter astonishment, a man standing just a few away, armed with a bow & arrow.
 - 2) There all night was the boy's father.